

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

CABINET

These minutes are draft until confirmed as a correct record at the next meeting.

Thursday, 13th July, 2023

Present:

Councillor Kevin Guy (Ch)	Leader of the Council, Liberal Democrat Group Leader
Councillor Tim Ball	Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services
Councillor Alison Born	Cabinet Member for Adult Services
Councillor Mark Elliott	Cabinet Member for Resources
Councillor Paul May	Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Councillor Matt McCabe	Cabinet Member for Built Environment and Sustainable Development
Councillor Manda Rigby	Cabinet Member for Highways
Councillor Paul Roper	Cabinet Member for Economic and Cultural Sustainable Development
Councillor Sarah Warren	Deputy Council Leader (statutory) and Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Travel
Councillor David Wood	Deputy Council Leader (non-statutory) and Cabinet Member for Council Priorities & Delivery

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Senior Democratic Services Officer read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

Cllr Sarah Warren made the following statement regarding bus services:

“As many residents are aware, several essential bus services in North East Somerset have now stopped running due to an ongoing funding crisis, including services 82, 179 and 768, and further services are currently at risk. I want to provide an urgent update on the work that we are doing to address this situation.

The West of England Combined Authority is the regional transport authority responsible for planning bus services in cooperation with local bus operators. The combined authority has a budget of many **tens of millions dedicated solely to transport and to economic development.**

Bath and North East Somerset Council pays an annual contribution towards the provision of supported services – those that are not deemed financially viable - through the regional Transport Levy. In this financial year we have increased our contribution by 30% to **£1m**, recognising the significant increases in costs to provide bus services. Unfortunately, however, the prices of our bus services increased by some 200%.

Like other councils, B&NES has no significant funding for buses over and above that which is already transferred annually to WECA as our transport levy. The remainder of our budget is fully committed to other purposes (including statutory services that we **cannot** choose to withdraw), such as social care, children's services (which together consume the vast majority of our budgets), housing, parks, waste management, libraries and so on, so there is very little remaining for discretionary expenditure such as on buses.

We now need the Metro Mayor to contribute a portion of the **£57m** of bus service improvement grant that he received from government **specifically and solely for bus services**, on our lost and at-risk services, as the Secretary of State has **indicated** he should. Other local authorities, who are not part of the West of England Combined Authority, have been able to do this – including North Somerset and Gloucestershire.

In the New Year, we were informed that the Metro Mayor planned to commission several new rural buses throughout North East Somerset. The 522, designed without consultation by the West of England Combined Authority, was introduced, and takes far longer than previous buses, travelling through areas with good bus services rather than villages with none.

The Mayor also decided to put a large proportion of his Bus Service Improvement Plan funding into the Westlink Demand Responsive Transport (or DRT) service. As many residents have found, DRT in its current form is not working. Westlink has proved unreliable and hard to access, and as the vehicles are usually seen almost empty, must be costing **much** more per passenger journey than the bus services they replaced, and that residents are desperate to see returned.

The Mayor has also chosen this month to commit **some £8m** to free travel on buses for residents in the month of their birthday. This birthday bonanza is of huge benefit to Bristolians with frequent bus services but is a further insult to our more rural residents, having recently lost all access to public transport and some now newly confined to their homes.

Residents in North East Somerset have been left with a public transport service which simply isn't working, some communities with frequent bus services and others with none. This is a deeply unsatisfactory situation and residents of all ages are impacted.

To address this desperate situation, my team and I have spent the last few months talking to B&NES and parish councillors from across North East Somerset, Cabinet

leads from neighbouring councils, bus experts, campaigners and residents, as well as to the Metro Mayor and his staff. We have developed a proposal that provides a cost-effective solution to improve local services.

Key elements of the proposal are:

- Targeted new bus routes to help re-connect towns and villages that have been abandoned by the Metro Mayor.
- Additional Westlink services along fixed routes at key commute and school times - to build trust in the new service, and to support other services.
- Funding solutions: including working with neighbouring councils on cross-boundary routes.

These proposals will safeguard threatened buses, and fill gaps where services have been lost – connecting communities with Bath and Bristol and between larger towns and villages in B&NES. We are very keen to work with the Metro Mayor to find a solution. This week, Cllr Guy has written to him to put our innovative ideas forward, and we hope he will respond positively to our constructive proposals.

We encourage members of the public who are concerned about bus services to write to the Metro Mayor to ask for his support.”

6 QUESTIONS FROM PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS

There were 14 questions from Councillors and 15 questions from members of the public.

[Copies of the questions and responses, including supplementary questions and responses if any, have been placed on the Minute book as Appendix 1 and are available on the Council's website.]

7 STATEMENTS OR PETITIONS FROM PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS

Members of the public and Councillors made statements as follows:

- Robbie Bentley – Public Transport Issues *(a copy of which is attached as appendix 2 to these minutes)*
- Joy Arnold – Loss of 179 Bus *(a copy of which is attached as appendix 3 to these minutes)*
- Paul Roles (Rosewell Court Residents' Association) – Damage to Pavement *(a copy of which is attached as appendix 4 to these minutes)*
- Nicolette Boater – Draft Corporate Strategy 2023-27 - *(a copy of which is attached as appendix 5 to these minutes)*
- Cllr Dine Romero – The Future of Culverhay - *(a copy of which is attached as appendix 6 to these minutes)*
- Malcolm Baldwin – Time to press the re-set button - *(a copy of which is attached as appendix 7 to these minutes)*

8 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS CABINET MEETING - 9TH MARCH 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 9th March 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

9 CONSIDERATION OF SINGLE MEMBER ITEMS REQUISITIONED TO CABINET

No single member items were requisitioned to Cabinet.

10 MATTERS REFERRED BY POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY BODIES

Cllr Robin Moss, Chair of the Corporate PDS Panel attended the meeting and gave feedback following the Panel's consideration of the draft Corporate Strategy 2023-27 at its meeting on 11th July 2023.

Cllr Moss highlighted the following issues:

- Concerns were expressed by the Panel regarding the cost-of-living crisis and how this would impact the Council over the next couple of years.
- There are three main elements to consider within a Corporate Strategy – internal (i.e., budgets and staffing), external factors not within our control and unforeseen consequences (such as the Covid pandemic).
- It is likely that Local Government will have to deal with the financial crisis with no help from Central Government.
- He thanked the Chief Executive and the Cabinet Member for Council Priorities and Delivery for attending the PDS Panel meeting to present the Corporate Strategy.

The Leader thanked Cllr Moss for attending the meeting and Cabinet noted the feedback from the Panel.

(A document setting out the detailed feedback from the Corporate PDS Panel is attached as Appendix 8 to these minutes).

11 SINGLE MEMBER CABINET DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE PREVIOUS CABINET MEETING

The Cabinet agreed to note the report.

12 UPDATE ON PROGRESS ON DELIVERING THE CORPORATE STRATEGY 2020-24 AND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022-23

Cllr Dave Wood introduced the report, moved the officer recommendation, and made the following statement:

“This is a moment to really reflect on the last four years and the incredible achievements this Council and its staff have made against the backdrop of the Covid pandemic and rising inflation.

We have:

- Invested extra millions into road repairs and cleaner streets, starting to reverse a decade of cuts to local government
- Introduced the first charging clean air zone (CAZ) outside of London
- Invested in high streets in Midsomer Norton, Keynsham and Bath
- Sharply increased renewable energy in the district
- Achieved and sustained our best recycling rate ever
- Built more pedestrian crossings, segregated cycle lanes and 20mph zones than ever before
- Created the Chew Valley recreational trail
- Found new ways of engaging people through Citizens' Juries
- Created the first new social rent properties in a generation
- Built a state-of-the-art new recycling centre in Keynsham
- Is the first Council in England to adopt a net zero based housing plan

These are the building blocks of future success as we embark on the historic second term voters have given us. The first administration to prove itself worth being re-elected for another four years. This is our record of action and I'll go on to talk about our promise of more in the next item."

Cllr Alison Born seconded the motion and made the following statement:

"As has been noted, this systematic approach to planning and performance was introduced by the previous Liberal Democrat administration. It has provided a structure for articulating our aims and our planned programmes of work; it has increased transparency and accountability to the residents we serve. Our clear guiding principle is to improve people's lives and this report accounts for progress across our services.

When developing the strategy for our first term, we were not expecting to spend two years in the grip of an unprecedented global pandemic that had a massive impact on people's lives, but the authority responded well to that challenge, we continued to deliver services throughout the pandemic, supporting residents and businesses and adapting to meet changing needs and circumstances. Our focus during the height of the pandemic was to protect, contain and mitigate the impact of the emergency and to lay the foundations for an effective and sustainable recovery.

The 2022/23 performance report provides information on the extent of that recovery and demonstrates the success of that strategy. I am going to focus particularly on actions we have taken to meet the needs of vulnerable people. We have continued to invest in social care and are now supporting significantly more looked after children with many more on child protection plans. Our Connecting Families Service has continued to provide effective support for families with complex needs and our children's services were rated Good by recent OFSTED inspection.

We have increased support to local third sector groups through the Community Contribution Fund and through targeted use of community Infrastructure Levy funds. We have responded positively and robustly to issues in local care homes, ensuring rapid improvements. We have worked with the community to welcome refugees to the area and have provided support and warm spaces to help residents deal with the cost-of-living crisis; we have provided free internet access at council libraries.

Our public health services responded very well throughout the pandemic, helping to keep local residents safe, they have also invested in social prescribing and other preventative measures that aim to improve the health and wellbeing of the local population.

This is not an exhaustive list, and it is not the end of the story, we plan to build on this progress over this current term and I am happy to second this motion.”

Cllr Tim Ball noted that the authority has delivered services and moved forward throughout the Covid pandemic, and he looked forward to continuing this in the next four years.

Cllr Paul May spoke regarding the new footbridge which is now operational and providing access to a school in Radstock. This is an example of how the Council is improving people’s lives as it will enable children to walk to school safely and will reduce the need for parents to drive pupils to school in line with the Council’s policy on climate change.

Cllr Matt McCabe noted that the Council’s Planning Team had been under a lot of pressure during the pandemic. He congratulated Planning Officers on winning two awards in the last year – the RTPI South West Award, Planning Authority of the Year and an Award for Planning Excellence.

Cllr Sarah Warren noted the declaration of a climate emergency and the introduction of an ecological emergency action plan. She welcomed the Local Plan Partial Update and highlighted the fact the B&NES was the first council to require net zero emissions for new housing developments and one of the first councils to require a net gain in biodiversity. She also welcomed the outcome of the clean air zone as there has been a 20% reduction in nitrogen dioxide levels.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

To note the progress made in delivering the Corporate Strategy and the highlights of Council performance and activity during 2022-23.

13 CORPORATE STRATEGY 2023-2027

Cllr Dave Wood introduced the report, moved the officer recommendation and made the following statement:

“The Corporate Strategy is a framework for what the Council will deliver for residents over the next four years. It brings together what you’ve told us is important, what you voted for in the election in May – and integrates this into the Council’s plans and way it makes decisions.

Listening to residents and acting on their concerns is our commitment. We will find new ways to reach residents to find out their views and priorities. We will work with communities to identify the local priorities that people really care about. Area working will ensure Council thinking is joined up and focussed on local communities.

We will continue to improve frontline services. Services declined after a decade of central government cuts to local government, but over the last four years we have started to reverse those cuts – millions extra invested in road repairs and cleaner

streets as one example. We will continue to improve frontline services and take pride in our area.

We will continue to put climate at the heart of everything that we do and will use an evidence-based approach to ensure all our decisions are helping us on our journey to Net Zero.

I'd like to thank the residents of B&NES for trusting us and giving the Lib Dems a historic second term in control of the Council, and with an increased majority. We will repay that trust by listening to you and focussing on the issues that matter to you the most."

Cllr Sarah Warren seconded the motion and made the following statement:

"This evening I am proud to support this corporate strategy, the first time ever that an administration in Bath and North East Somerset has been entrusted by voters with a second term to really embed their policies. This will be an opportunity to double down on action on the climate and ecological emergencies declared in the last four years.

This month, the world has repeatedly recorded the hottest day since records began, and it follows the UK's warmest year on record. Lord Deben, Chair of the Committee on Climate Change told the Prime Minister a fortnight ago that, "the UK has lost its clear global climate leadership", and that, "game-changing interventions from the US and Europe, which will turbocharge growth of renewables, are leaving the UK behind."

The situation also remains serious for nature. The Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs published biodiversity indicators for the UK last December, showing declines since 2015 in biodiversity of marine life, of habitats and species of European importance, of wild birds, and of pollinating insects. Bearing in mind of course, that the natural world provides our food, our clean air and water, and ultimately disposes of our biodegradable waste. The same report also shows declining investment in biodiversity over the same period.

It is in this context, of an ambivalent UK government that has lost interest in developing net zero industries, backtracked on fossil fuel commitments, and whose progress the Climate Change Committee has criticised as too slow and lacking urgency, that it is beholden now on local government to show leadership, and this is what Bath and North East Somerset's Corporate Strategy aims to do for the next four years.

We are in no doubt that we will be delayed and stymied at times by lack of government support: for instance, by restrictive national planning rules, by government prevarication around support for making homes energy efficient, by a profit-led bus industry, by an inadequate electricity grid, by transport ministers actively undermining our efforts to enable walking, wheeling and cycling, and by government's failure to control airport expansion, to mention just a few.

Nevertheless, I am proud that our latest corporate strategy shows a clear determination that Bath and North East Somerset council will continue to do all within our power to provide the support to enable our community to be carbon neutral and nature positive by 2030. Over the next four years, we will further embed these values into all our decision-making, which will be made in the context both of an

understanding of the environmental limits of our planet, and overlaid on a social and economic foundation, in line with the principles of doughnut economics.

I am delighted to second the recommendation this evening.”

Cllr Tim Ball stated that he was happy to see Liberal Democrats working hard for residents and stressed the importance of remaining focussed on the delivery of this strategy.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

- (1) To approve the draft Corporate Strategy 2023-2027 attached at Appendix 1 of the report and to recommend it to Council for adoption.
- (2) To delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Deputy Leader (Cabinet member for Council Priorities and Delivery) to develop and implement an organisational decision framework tool to support implementation of the Corporate Strategy.

14 TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN REPORT 2022/23

Cllr Mark Elliott introduced the report, moved the officer recommendation and made the following statement:

“Just to provide some context, this is an information report on Treasury Management performance for the last year in line with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy Code of Practice which requires council to approve an annual Treasury Management report within 6 months of the end of the financial year.

So, it's a backward-looking report, detailing how the council's savings and borrowing performed over the financial year from April 2022 to March 2023.

Treasury management is obviously a vital part of the council's financial activity and whilst it can seem a dry topic, sound and successful treasury management is a major part of the bedrock on which the council's finances are built.

Looking at our investment performance – the average rate of interest earned across the portfolio was 2.09% but that obviously hides some volatility. It's important to remember this period starts in April 2022, when the economic environment was very different - prior to the disastrous period of Trussanomics and the KamaKwasi budget in the early Autumn. Bank of England Base Rate increased to 4.25% from 0.75% over the year with Bank of England interest rate action remaining robust in line with their remit for tackling inflation. This trend has continued with rates now 5% following further increases as inflationary pressures remained elevated.

The average return has continued to increase during the year from around 1% in April to just below 4% in March, as the Bank of England interest rate rises over the period fed through to our investments.

The report highlights the impact on the investment market of persistent inflation, increasing interest rates and risk of recession which has led to decrease in the valuation of the Council's strategic long terms investments which reduced from £10.3m to £8.8m over the year. However, this change does not directly impact on the

revenue position of the Council as there is currently a statutory override in place. Under the current rules any movement would only affect the revenue position if the investments were sold - and these are long term investments, so that is not our intention.

Turning to borrowing - at the end of the year our total borrowing was £210m - a reduction of around £9m from the start of the year. This is because we didn't take out any new borrowing during the year, and obviously principal capital repayments continued on our long-term Annuity Public Works Loan Board loans, and some shorter-term borrowing was repaid as loans reached maturity. Overall - an underspend of £2.8m was achieved in respect of interest and capital financing, as result of higher than budgeted investment income, a delay in borrowing and savings on Minimum Revenue Provision due to capital spend reprofiling.

Finally - The report includes performance against all the indicators set in the Treasury Management Strategy and confirms that these are all within approved limits. I'd like to commend officers on both the production of the report and more importantly on their sound handling of the council's investments over the period."

Cllr Matt McCabe seconded the motion noting that Local Authorities have been affected by the current economic situation.

Cllr Kevin Guy highlighted the sound financial management of the Liberal Democrats in difficult circumstances.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

- (1) To note the Treasury Management Report to 31st March 2023, prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Code of Practice.
- (2) To note the Treasury Management Indicators to 31st March 2023.

15 REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT 2022/23

Cllr Mark Elliott introduced the report, moved the officer recommendation and made the following statement:

"Again, this is a backward-looking report, this time setting out the revenue and capital outturn for 2022/23 - in other words, it reports how the council performed compared to the budget set out at the beginning of the year.

The main headline here is the extremely positive news that the council had a favourable outturn position of £60,000 in 2022/23. In other words, we finished the year £60k better off than the budget predicted.

This is all the more impressive given that at Quarter 3 last year we were forecasting a £1.54m negative position, and in Q2 that figure was well north of £4m. Balancing the books has been made extremely difficult for everyone by the national Tory government's financial incompetence, with the current Sunak administration seeming unable to stop the rot started by Johnson and accelerated by Truss and Kwarteng, and that affects local government as much as everyone else.

It's nothing I can take credit for of course, having only taken up this role in May, but I'd like to congratulate my predecessor, the officers and the previous cabinet, on their hard work in pulling that position back in line despite the pressures outside their control. It demonstrates a really constructive, collaborative and positive approach to dealing with the financial pressures we, along with all other local authorities, are facing.

However, the overall figure does smooth over some significant variability between different services. The main pressure continued to be in Children's Services which resulted in an over budget position for that service of £5.4m during the year.

This was largely mitigated by increased income in both Heritage & Transport services, by reduced borrowing costs, by higher interest earned on cash balances and by the release of corporate contingencies.

The year-end position of uncommitted non-earmarked reserves was £12.6m which is in line with the risk assessed requirements agreed in the 2022/23 Budget Report.

The capital spend in 2022/23 was £74m against a budget of £107m giving a variance of £33m. This is primarily because of the delivery time to complete some projects moving them into future financial periods.

The report seeks the Cabinet approval to the revenue carry forwards of £158k to fund commitments that will now take place in 2023/24, and to transfer the £60k net underspend to the Revenue Budget Contingency Reserve which provides for future revenue pressures during the year which can't be mitigated by management action. So again, I'd like to thank officers for the production of the report, and for their hard work throughout the year."

Cllr Manda Rigby seconded the report and made the following statement:

"I am very pleased to second this report and endorse all that my colleague Cllr Elliott has said.

First, I need to wholeheartedly echo his praise and thanks for all those who worked so hard to bring us in on budget. You don't have to look too far to see examples of where local councils have not been able to do this. The quality of reporting is also worth highlighting, we have the information made available to us in a timely fashion to be able to make the decisions we need to in order to claw back overspends, or support income generation.

That bit is important. We haven't managed to hit budget by stopping all activity and cutting it to the statutory bone. We have managed to hit it, whilst also delivering the vast majority of our priorities and what our community needs.

Being able to deliver our commitments has also relied a lot on external funding, and or grant applications. I long for a return to a time when local government is adequately funded, does not have to burn up cycles of officer time in preparing speculative bids against changing criteria, forcing councils to compete against each other for resources in an inefficient and non-strategic way. It is entirely in the governments gift to choose to fund local councils correctly, they have chosen not to do so.

I want to give special thanks whilst seconding this report to the highways team. Anyone who has tried to do personal construction work over the past year knows how both labour and materials costs have rocketed. Highways work in the council has not been immune to these pressures, but through good negotiation and management we have retained best value for our residents and have protected the income so necessary to the council's finances.

Absolutely we can't take for granted that we came and will continue to come in on budget. But we can rest assured we have a great team who have delivered and are best placed to deliver again.

I'm delighted to second the report."

RESOLVED (unanimously):

- (1) To note the revenue budget outturn on budget position for 2022/23, after allowing for carry forwards and transfers to reserves.
- (2) To approve the revenue carry forward proposals listed in the tables in paragraph 3.7 of the report.
- (3) To approve that all other over budgets are written-off as an exception to the Budget Management Rules for 2022/23.
- (4) To approve the transfer of £0.06m to corporate earmarked reserves.
- (5) To note the revenue virements for 2022/23 reported for information in Appendix 2(i) of the report.
- (6) To note the reserve positions and the use of flexible capital receipts shown in paragraph 3.21 of the report.
- (7) To note the outturn position of the 2022/23 capital programme in paragraph 3.30, and the funding outlined in paragraph 3.32 of the report.
- (8) To approve the capital rephasing and write-off of net underspends as listed in Appendix 3 of the report. This reflects the outturn spend position on projects against final budgets as detailed in Appendix 4(ii) of the report.

16 REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING, CASH LIMITS AND VIREMENTS – APRIL TO JUNE 2023

Cllr Mark Elliott introduced the report, moved the officer recommendation and made the following statement:

"Rather than being a backward-looking report, this one is giving the current, in-year position compared against this year's budget. It's designed to give an early review of budget performance using the first two months of financial data. This is to help us identify budget risks early.

I mentioned in previous reports the national Tory government's inability to get inflation under control, and UK Inflation (CPI) is still proving very stubborn - holding at around 8.7% - which is obviously affecting the cost of delivering Council services.

To cover the easy topic first, the 2023/24 Capital Programme is a forecast of £92.8m against a budget of £95.0m - so a small underspend. Whilst we want to see our capital programme proceeding according to plan, I don't think there is anything of serious concern here.

With regard to the Revenue Budget, the current forecast to the end of the year has identified above budget pressures of £3.96m. For context that's against an overall revenue budget of just over £135m - so just shy of 3% over budget. Whilst 3% might not sound like a lot, this is in the first two months of the financial year - there is absolutely no room for complacency and we, the whole cabinet, need to be working to bring this back in line as quickly as possible.

The major part of the overage is down to the continuing pressure on Children's services which makes up £3.3m of the forecast budget pressure. This is a national problem being faced by all councils across the country - central government simply isn't providing enough funding into the system to cope with the constantly rising pressures in this area.

There are also workforce pressures across Council services which is creating a reliance on higher cost agency staff, and we need to reduce that reliance as quickly as possible.

On the upside, we have seen good income performance across our corporate budgets and chargeable services that is helping to mitigate some of the rising costs in other areas.

I don't want to be too gloomy - identifying the issue this early in the financial year is a really good thing. I know the council's leadership team are now working on financial recovery plans to bring us back into budget, this will be reported back to Cabinet as part of our Quarter 2 monitoring. I urge all cabinet colleagues to continue to work closely with their senior directors and other senior leaders over the coming couple of months to quickly identify, and then monitor, mitigation plans for your individual portfolios. Whilst we're seeing particular pressures in one portfolio, getting the budget back on track is something for us all to pull together to resolve.

I'll finish with thanks again to officers both in the finance dept and across the council. We have a great team and I'd like to thank them for their efforts in less-than-ideal financial conditions."

Cllr Paul May seconded the motion and made the following statement:

"Thank you I wish to second this item and specifically address the children's services pressures.

The previous council resources cabinet member made it clear we would be transparent re council budgets and monitoring, so it is essential to the public that we manage and show pressures where they exist at the earliest stage possible.

B&NES children's services is respected and well run being rated as 'Good' across all services by Ofsted at our latest inspection confirmed by them recently in their annual assessment. The predicted overspend is in addition to additional support given in the approved Council budget for this year.

We deal with the most vulnerable children in our community and the work of our staff to support them and their families is something to admire.

The forecast is based upon the Conservative government allocating non-resident unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to local authorities. We welcome them, but the funding does not reflect their needs. Their status takes years to resolve by the Home Office, so as they become adults at the age of 18, our legal commitments then continue until the age of 25. We have no control over this system, and it creates officer and financial pressures at a time of increasing needs of local families following the pandemic. This is not just a local pressure and national discussions are taking place.

There are two other main drivers of this over-budget position. One is the demand-led placement and package budgets and the other is the increasing pressures from ongoing cost increase across Home to School Transport.

The service continues to look at all its costs and pressures to minimise long term these revenue increases, but I welcome the openness of our system to report things so early.”

RESOLVED (unanimously):

- (1) To note the 2023/24 revenue budget position (as at the end of June 2023).
- (2) To note the revenue virements listed for information in Appendix 3(i) of the report.
- (3) To note the capital year-end forecast detailed in paragraph 3.19 of the report.
- (4) To note the changes in the capital programme including capital schemes that have been agreed for full approval under delegation listed in Appendix 4(i) of the report.

The meeting ended at 7.42 pm

Chair _____

Date Confirmed and Signed _____

Prepared by Democratic Services